Met Office to see further space weather collaboration

27 June 2012 - The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the United Kingdom Government Office for Science agree to strengthen collaboration on space weather.

The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the United Kingdom Government Office for Science agreed to strengthen the countries' collaborative efforts to protect critical infrastructure from the impacts of space weather.

As part of the agreement it has been announced that the Met Office will be given access to NOAA's state of the art 'ENLIL' computer model that is used to predict the arrival time of Coronal Mass Ejections.

Coronal Mass Ejections (CMEs), solar flares and the solar wind have an affect on technology and systems such as satellites, GPS and radio communications. Therefore, space weather forecasts are of crucial importance to the Armed Forces and the aviation industry as well as energy transmission and the communications industry.

The agreement announced today is the latest step in an effort to combine the space weather resources and scientific expertise of both countries. UK Prime Minister David Cameron and US President Barack Obama highlighted the countries' space weather partnership in London in May 2011, and again at the White House in March of this year.

The Met Office and NOAA signed a Memorandum of Understanding in February 2011 providing for a coordinated US-UK partnership.

The Met Office is working to develop space weather capability and share valuable knowledge and expand the UK's space weather forecasting capabilities with a range of partners such as NOAA in the United States and the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC) and the British Geological Survey (BGS) in the UK.

Dr. Kathryn D. Sullivan, NOAA Deputy Administrator said: "To effectively manage space weather threats, strong collaboration is required among scientists, forecasters, emergency planners, industry and others. I am pleased that, in recognizing the seriousness of these threats, the UK and NOAA are working together to better understand and forecast space weather and to use that knowledge to safeguard lives, livelihoods and property."

Sir John Beddington, UK Government Chief Scientific Adviser said: "Space weather is a global challenge that requires a coordinated response. The inclusion of space weather in the UK's National Risk Register is evidence that we are already taking it seriously. Today's joint statement will build on this and see the UK and US working more closely together to better understand and respond to space weather threats."

Phil Evans, Director of Government Services at the Met Office said: "Working with NOAA is a crucial step in creating the essential partnerships required to ensure the UK is warned of, and protected against the threat posed by space weather."

The full statement can be found on the NOAA website.

Contact details

Members of the media can email: pressoffice@metoffice.gov.uk or call us on +44 (0)1392 886655*.

Out-of-hours an operator will contact the on-duty press officer.

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